

ABSTRACT

The present invention provides a method and apparatus for users to search networks, both their own network and their peers' networks, all under the umbrella of a "multiple level access" security system. The present invention has been designed to optimize networking capabilities among users in a comprehensive online community. Networking among such a secured environment will allow users an opportunity to enhance their networking potential by expanding their networks to their peers' and beyond. A user registers with the online community and personally adds individuals that they know to their personal networking database. While adding these peers to the networking database, the user grants a specific level of access to each individual. This security measure is devised to discourage solicitation from other unwanted online users. The levels of access give the user an opportunity to control the amount of personal information, including contacts that they make, available to their individual peers. Based on the level of access granted by the user, the peer may or may not be able to access the user's information or the user's personal databases for potential networking. The level of access granted by two individuals need not be the same for each other.